

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE
311 Grand Avenue, Ste #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010**



Action Summary

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

1:50 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY/LATE - ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.M.
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Elizabeth Boyle
Barry Buchanan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jessica Rienstra
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Elizabeth Boyle, Barry Buchanan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jessica Rienstra, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2026-376](#) Presentation from the Birch Bay Community Advisory Committee regarding their first year of activities and community engagement

PRESENTED

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-186](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 2, Land Use

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 2 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 5.12.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 5.12.2026.

MOTION 2

Motion approved to add a new Policy 2H-4 as follows (in place of amendment number 129):

Policy 2H-4: Lands designated for agriculture under Whatcom County code shall retain their agricultural designation and associated protections, and remain farmable and available for agricultural use consistent with the intent of the agricultural zone as defined in Whatcom County Code, regardless of whether they are in active agricultural production unless such agricultural lands are de-designated to UGA or another non-resource land use type consistent with the provisions of the GMA. Periodically review Title 16.16 (Critical Areas) to ensure the program components of Article 8 of Title 16.16 Conservation Program on Agricultural Lands (CPAL)—are compatible with GMA requirements to protect both critical areas and agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

MOTION 3

Motion approved to include amendment 137 (Policy 2U-11) as amended (via motion) so that the policy reads:

Policy 2U-11: To inform long term planning within the Bellingham Urban Growth Area, coordinate with the City of Bellingham to complete an annexation and land use compatibility plan that evaluates the long-term compatibility of existing light and heavy industrial zoning with surrounding land uses. Such evaluation shall include consideration of:

- Proximity to established and planned residential neighborhoods;
- Zoning transitions, landscaping and buffering between residential and industrial uses;
- Cumulative environmental and public health impacts;
- Economic impacts;
- Infrastructure capacity and fiscal sustainability;
- Development patterns consistent with walkability and reduced vehicle miles traveled.

MOTION 4

Motion approved to strike the entirety of the new goal as noted in amendment number 139 (this makes amendments 140 and 141 no longer needed).

MOTION 5

Motion approved to include the phrase "The existing industrial uses at Cherry Point do not conflict with aquatic reserve status" that was stricken in amendment 142.

MOTION 6

Motion approved to strike the language that represents amendment numbers 143-145 (rejecting those amendments)

MOTION 7

Motion approved to include amendment number 146 amending Policy 2CC-16 and to add "significant" before "adverse impacts" so that it would read:

Policy 2CC-16: The County will, through its adopted SEPA policies and applicable permitting processes, identify and mitigate significant adverse impacts on public safety, transportation, the economy, and environment from new fossil fuel facilities, including new or expanded crude oil, coal, liquefied petroleum gases, and natural gas facilities within the Cherry Point UGA.

MOTION 8

Motion approved to strike the words "preapplication correspondence or" in Policy 2CC-16 as noted in amendment number 147.

MOTION 9

Motion approved to include amendment numbers 149, 150, and 151.

MOTION 10

Motion approved to include amendment number 165 (regarding Policy 2QQ-3, Policy 2QQ-4, and Policy 2QQ-5) so that Policy 2QQ-3 reads:

Consider opportunities to coordinate and engage with the Tribes on relevant county planning and land use matters.

MOTION 11

Motion approved to include amendment numbers 166 and 167 as presented by PDS staff (as noted in "Memo - PDS on siting criteria for crisis facilities" on file).

MOTION 12

Motion approved to amend amendment number 135 to add the word “municipal” before “urban growth areas” in the first sentence of Policy 2A-9 so that the policy reads:

Where heavy industrial zoning is located within municipal urban growth areas adjacent to residential neighborhoods, the County should identify and implement measures that minimize neighborhood exposure to industrial pollution and advance public health, environmental justice, and long-term economic resilience. These measures should be developed with meaningful involvement of affected communities.

Notes for Chapter 2 amendments: It was determined that amendment numbers 140 and 141 were no longer needed, and councilmembers considered amendment numbers 152-162 as being included without a motion.

2. [AB2026-250](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 8, Resource Lands
NOT ACTED UPON
3. [AB2026-261](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 10, Environment
NOT ACTED UPON
4. [AB2026-263](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Appendices (Appendix A: Glossary, Appendix B: Acronyms, Appendix D: Bibliography, Appendix E: 20-Year Capital Facilities Plan, Appendix G: Airport Overlay Zones, Appendix H: Airport Imaginary Surfaces, Appendix I: Housing Needs Analysis, Appendix J: Subsidized Housing Needs and Funding) and Foothills Subarea Plan Amendments
NOT ACTED UPON
5. [AB2026-249](#) Discussion regarding schedule for Council review of the comprehensive plan update
DISCUSSED

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2026-272](#) Request for motion regarding council meeting procedures for discussion of agenda bill items on the day of introduction
FORWARDED TO COUNCIL WITHOUT A RECOMMENDATION

Items Added by Revision**Other Business**

Adjournment